

Army Spied on 18,000 Civilians in 2-Year Operation

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 17—The United States Army fed the names of about 18,000 American civilians into its computers, dossiers and files in a wide-ranging intelligence operation during the tumultuous days of civil disturbances from the summer of 1967 through the summer of 1969.

In the operation, which was ordered ended last year, 1,000 Army agents gathered personal and political information on obscure persons, as well as the prominent, on advocates of violent protest and participants in legitimate political activity, on the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the John Birch Society, on the Black Panthers

and the Ku Klux Klan, on the Students for a Democratic Society and the Daughters of the American Revolution. The emphasis was on radicals, black militants and dissenters against the war in Vietnam.

The military intelligence operation picked up much of its information from local police officials and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but supplemented that data and collected its own through agents posing as members of the groups under surveillance, as newsmen, or merely as interested bystanders.

Thus, a black agent registered at New York University in 1968 to report on students taking a course in black studies. Another agent joined the Youth International party, or Yippies,

and slept alongside its candidate, a pig named "Pigasus," during the counter-inaugural demonstration here in January, 1969.

The Army now authorizes only limited intelligence gathering on incidents that might lead to a Presidential call for Federal troops. But attention was sharply focused last month on the Army operation when Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, contended that prominent political figures in Illinois had been under military surveillance since 1968.

Senator Ervin is skeptical of the Army's announcement about halting the spying and has scheduled hearings by the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, of which he is chair-

man, to begin Feb. 23. He said the Army "must disclose in full what happened and why it happened and what has been done to insure that it will never happen again."

Details of the operation, known as Continental United States Intelligence, or Conus Intel, emerged from interviews with civilian and uniformed Pentagon officials, Congressional sources, agents of the Secret Service and former agents, and from a study of Army documents and files.

The findings included the following:

¶ Directives from Cabinet-level officials, authorizing intelligence gathering to help the Army carry out its mission of

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quelling civil disorders, were imprecise. Army guidelines for subordinate commands were loosely drawn—like "a license to steal," one Pentagon source said.

¶ In a variation of an old Army game, each subordinate expanded on his instructions to please his superiors and to protect himself from charges that he had not done his job.

¶ Once started, the intelligence operation generated a demand for its product from the Justice Department, the F.B.I., police departments and other government agencies. A source close to the operation said, "We created addicts for this stuff all over the Government."

¶ Some younger agents enjoyed playing James Bond. Largely college-educated and working away from regular Army discipline, these men found it more fun to spy on political agitators than to make the routine security checks that have long been a primary task of military intelligence.

¶ Some overzealous military and civilian officials saw in racial and political outbursts the spectre of Communist sub-

version and an attempt to overthrow the Government.

Conus Intel was but one part of a vast, interlocking intelligence exchange that Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and probably President Nixon, knew was in operation, although they may not have been aware of all of its details.

¶ There was no conspiracy, as far as could be discerned, by the military to subvert political liberties. One critical former agent said that "these were not malevolent men." Rather, he said, they were well-intentioned men carrying out what they considered to be legitimate orders from political authorities.

Commenting on this last point, the Army's general counsel, Robert E. Jordan 3d, said, "I honestly believe we drifted into this area without quite realizing what we were getting into and because no one else was around to do the job." He added:

"I'm convinced that no one intended to spy on individuals or control civilian life in any way. But I also believe that some of the things begun, if expanded, sure as hell posed a real risk."

Overhauled in 1963

The military intelligence ap-

paratus was overhauled when a delayed security check in 1963 showed that an Army sergeant in a sensitive post had been a Soviet agent. That led to the formation, on Jan. 1, 1965, of the Army Intelligence Command at Fort Holabird, Md.

The eight military intelligence groups around the country, each with about 400 men, were transferred from area commanders to the centralized control of the Army Intelligence Command to make security clearances and other anti-subversive operations more efficient.

That set up the apparatus for the subsequent collection of information from the 1,000 agents in the 300 military intelligence field offices across the nation. The intelligence was analyzed by the Counterintelligence Analysis Detachment, or CIAD, in the office of the Army's assistant chief of staff for intelligence.

Riots and Protests

During the summer and fall of 1965, the nation was shaken by racial riots in the Watts section of Los Angeles and elsewhere, and by the first protests against the increasing American involvement in Vietnam. Federal troops were not called to curb the riots and protests, but

it became evident that they might be needed.

In 1966, the Army Intelligence Command instructed the military intelligence groups to collect basic information about cities that might be useful if the Army were called.

Not much was done about gathering the information, but agents making routine visits to campuses for background investigations began picking up leaflets from antiwar dissenters and listening in on their rallies. The Counterintelligence

office of the 108th Military Intelligence Group, for example, rode buses into Washington and stayed with the crowd all through the demonstration.

But the Army underestimated the numbers of people that would show up, how long they would stay, and the degree of violence they would attempt. For those failures, senior officers caught what one source described as "undiluted hell" from high political leaders, apparently including President Johnson.

Review Urged

Immediately after the march on the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara asked the Under Secretary of the Army, David E. McGiffert, to review the entire role of Federal troops in civil disturbances. Mr. McGiffert called a meeting that included Warren Christopher, the Deputy Attorney General; Stephen Pollak, a special assistant to the President, and numerous others from

Analysis Detachment started monitoring expressions of dissent and black militance, mostly by having a few men clip newspapers. Agents in an unmarked truck followed James Meredith on his "walk against fear" through Mississippi.

Caught Unprepared

In 1967, the Army was caught unprepared when racial riots broke out in Newark and Detroit. Army troops called in to help restore order had little more than Esso road maps to guide them in both cities.

The Army's chief intelligence officer then was Maj. Gen. William P. Yarborough, a longtime counterintelligence and psychological warfare specialist. The flamboyant general, known as "Big Y" for the way he signed memorandums, told subordinates that the rioters were "insurgents" manipulated by the Communists—and he began trying to find out more about them.

General Yarborough, now a lieutenant general serving in Hawaii, said last week through a Pentagon spokesman that "my recommendation that United States Army planners use the counterinsurgency planning guide in connection with massive civil disturbances inside the United States did not in any way imply that I believed those phenomena constituted actual insurgency."

Teletype Network

General Yarborough ordered a Conus Intel communications center known as "Operations IV" to be set up at Fort Holabird and a nationwide teletype network that would feed information to it. Large amounts of information came from the F.B.I. and local police departments, but he also instructed military intelligence agents to pick up information on their own.

Continental United States Intelligence paid particular attention to the well-publicized plans for the anti-Vietnam march on the Pentagon in October, 1967. Agents from the New York field

the Departments of Defense and Justice, the F.B.I., the Secret Service and local police officials.

Out of their study came the Army's civil disturbance plan in December, 1967. Two months later, an intelligence annex that set out information requirements for Army field commanders was added to the plan. That was the beginning of the "city books" that detailed the information a commander might need if he moved troops into an urban area.

Much of the information involved tactical intelligence—where troops would land, where they would bivouac, where the hospitals and the police stations were situated. Army officers met with the police officials to see where trouble might occur. They talked with police officers down to the precinct level to spot gun shops and liquor stores that might be targets for rioters.

Possible Agitators

In addition, Army officers slid into the political sphere by asking the police for the names and pictures of possible riot agitators. They also asked the police for the names and pictures of people who might be willing to help calm a crowd.

That information, along with other material from the F.B.I. and the Secret Service, was fed back to Washington, where it went into "the compendium" compiled by the Counterintelligence Analysis Detachment. "The compendium" was a two-volume encyclopedia that contained pictures and data, including the political beliefs, on people who might either foment

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COUNTERINTELLIGENCE SPOT REPORT

USAINTO SR NO. 311

1. NO. 108TH MI GP

2. 108-9038-146

3. THE CRAZIES

4. NONE

5. 1330 EST. 1 MAR 69, BELLEVUE HOSPITAL, 467 1ST AVE, NYC, AND THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY.

6. NONE

7. A GROUP KNOWN AS "THE CRAZIES", COMPOSED OF PERSONS IN THE YOUTH INTERNATIONAL PARTY AND ANOTHER GROUP CALLED "UP AGAINST THE WALL" PLAN TO ANNOUNCE THEIR FORMAL "BIRTH" BY ENGAGING IN THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES ON 1 MAR 69:

A. FIRST, THE CRAZIES PLAN TO ENTER BELLEVUE HOSPITAL, LOCATED AT 467 1ST AVE., NYC, WITH TOY GUNS AND STEAL ONE OF THE PATIENTS OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. THE CRAZIES PLAN TO PUT A STRAIGHT JACKET ON ONE OF THEIR OWN MEMBERS, SNEAK HIM INTO BELLEVUE AND THEN OTHER CRAZIES WITH THE TOY GUNS PLAN TO ENTER AND STEAL THE PATIENT.

B. AFTER THEY LEAVE BELLEVUE THE CRAZIES PLAN TO TRAVEL TO THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY AND BOARD THE BOAT WHICH TRAVELS BETWEEN LOWER NYC AND STATEN ISLAND. THEY PLAN TO ENTER THE BOAT PEACEFULLY, IN PAYING THEIR WAY AND NOT JUMPING OVER THE RAIL, AND WHEN THEY GET ON BOARD THE PLAN TO THREATEN THE BOAT'S CAPTAIN BY DEMANDING THAT HE TAKE THEM TO CUBA. WHEN THE CAPTAIN OBVIOUSLY REFUSES TO DO SO, THEY PLAN TO RUSH TO ONE SIDE AND THREATEN TO "TIP THE BOAT OVER."

C. MILITARY PERSONNEL TRAVELLING TO NYC OFTEN USE THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY.

9. 1750 EST. 27 FEB 69

10. CONTINUE LIAISON WITH LOCAL AGENCIES

11. NY FBI

12. B-6

13. 1510 EST. 27 FEB 69 - D.A. BARRIEN, ROOM Y, 108TH MI GP

14. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THIS MATTER WILL BE REPORTED WHEN RECEIVED.

Intelligence on "The Crazies," who, according to report, were to have seized a Staten Island ferry in March, 1969.

a civil disturbance. counterintelligence group was also charged by Mr. McGiffert with trying to predict when and where a civil disturbance might break out.

But the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in April, 1968, put an end to that idea. The rioting that occurred in 100 cities after his assassination showed that the site of a civil disturbance could not be predicted.

High-Level Review

Although the Army was better prepared to handle the disorders in Washington, Baltimore and Chicago than it had been during earlier riots in Newark and Detroit, the need for Federal troops and the nationwide tension stimulated another high-level review. At meetings in the Pentagon on April 12 and in the White House on April 15, 1968, Mr. McGiffert proposed that Army intelligence concentrate on civil disturbance warnings.

Out of those meetings also came a requirement that the Army be prepared to send 10,000 troops on short notice to any one of 25 cities. That number was later reduced to about 10 cities where the National Guard and the local police were considered unable to handle things on their own.

Through the summer of 1968, Army intelligence operations

intensified. The Army put into effect its civil disturbance information plan on May 2, giving its agents more collection requirements.

'Beat the A. P.'

They were told to report on everything that bore the remotest connection to civil disturbances. Maj. Gen. William H. Blakefield, the intelligence commander, told his subordinates to "beat the Associated Press" in their reporting.

General Yarborough set up a task force in the Counterintelligence Analysis Detachment to study information about the 1968 poor people's campaign and Resurrection City in Washington, which were closely scrutinized by military intelligence agents.

The counterintelligence detachment, which had been microfilming information related to its foreign intelligence tasks, also began feeding into the record domestic intelligence from Army agents and many other sources, including the press.

The intelligence command started distributing its "blacklist," which included names, pictures, personal data and political characterizations, such as "radical" or "militant," of potential troublemakers. The "blacklist" went to law enforcement agencies at all levels, as well as Army commanders and military intelligence groups.

Protecting Candidates

In June, 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated and Congress passed a resolution giving the Secret Service the authority to draw on the Army and other Federal agencies for help in protecting national political candidates.

Paul Nitze, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, signed an order on June 8 that was the most explicit directive until then on the Army's intelligence gathering procedures. The order gave formal instructions to provide to the Pentagon all of the essential intelligence data on civil disturbances.

The intelligence command at Fort Holabird began using computers to store information on civil disturbances. One data bank contained a file on incidents, a second a biographical file on soldiers who were considered possible dissenters.

A similar data bank was opened at the Continental Army Command headquarters at Fort Monroe, Va., for a program called Rita, for Resistance in the Army. Still another data bank was at III Corps headquarters at Fort Hood, Tex. This data bank concentrated on civil disturbance information because two Army divisions at Fort Hood had antiriot respon-

sibilities.

'Domestic War Room'

The Directorate for Civil Disturbance Planning and Operations was set up in June, 1968, in what came to be known as the "domestic war room" in the basement of the Pentagon. This group was responsible for ordering airlifts, troop deployment and logistics in a civil disorder and became a major consumer of Army intelligence data.

When the Republicans convened in Miami in July, 1968, to nominate Mr. Nixon as their Presidential candidate, the Air Force was in charge of the Defense Department's role there. The Army, however, furnished about 30 men from the Criminal Investigation Division of the military police, plus 17 dog handlers and 40 bomb disposal specialists, to protect the candidates and the delegates.

Military intelligence agents from the 111th Group at Fort McPherson, Ga., were in Miami to watch for civil disturbances. Most of the agents were posted outside the convention hall and in Liberty City, near Miami, where racial disorders occurred.

Mingled With Delegates

But there was also an intelligence command post inside the hall. Agents were stationed around the edge of the floor, and several officers in civilian clothes mingled with the delegates. No political information,

however, appeared to have been collected.

At the Democratic National Convention in Chicago the next month, the Army again sent military police in civilian clothes to help the Secret Service protect the candidates. Intelligence agents from the 113th Group, considered among the most effective, reported on civil disturbances to inform the 7,000 troops positioned near the city.

In addition, electronic specialists from the Army Security Agency intercepted radio messages transmitted on walkie-talkies used by leaders of the anti-Vietnam demonstrators. Pentagon officials adamantly asserted that no telephones were tapped or rooms bugged.

Cover Organization

An intelligence crew of cameramen, posing as newsmen from a cover organization called Mid-West Video News, took pictures of the demonstrators and obtained a filmed interview with Abbie Hoffman, who later was one of the defendants at the trial of the Chicago Seven.

By the end of 1968, the

Army intelligence operation was moving at top speed. When dissenters planned their counter-inaugural demonstrations in Washington in January, 1969, the Army knew how many protesters would show up and what they planned to do. The counterintelligence detachment was able to advise that the protests would not require Federal troops.

The same was true of the anti-Vietnam demonstrations in October and November, 1969. For example, Army intelligence agents had studied David Dellinger, another defendant in the Chicago Seven trial, well enough to know when the protest leader planned his confrontation with the police at the Justice Department and to advise on the police forces that would be needed to control the confrontation.

Extensive Files

Throughout 1969, Army intelligence turned out an average of 1,200 spot reports each month on incidents around the nation. By that time, there were extensive incident and personality files in every military intelligence field, regional and group headquarters, plus the computer banks at Fort Holabird, Fort Monroe and Fort Hood. In addition, the counterintelligence detachment's 120,000 pages of microfilm contained about 5,000 pages on civilians.

At one military intelligence group, a file was opened on the D.A.R. When a man representing himself as an official of the organization asked the Army for a senior officer as a speaker, military intelligence was asked to check the D.A.R. to see whether it had male employees. It did.

Just how extensive all those files were, nobody knows precisely. The main computer was programed for incidents rather than people. Not all of the files were ever compiled in one place to eliminate duplication. Moreover, the Army says most of them have been destroyed by now and those that remain have been sealed for possible use in appeals to suits brought by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Laws of Physics

Even as the Army intelligence operation was speeding along, however, some efforts were beginning to be made to slow it down. But stopping it proved difficult. Bureaucracies seem to follow the laws of physics—a bureaucracy at rest tends to stay at rest; a bureaucracy in motion tends to remain in motion.

General Yarborough, who had started the Army intelligence operations, was replaced in August, 1968, by Maj. Gen. Joseph A. McChristian, a former head of all military intelligence in Vietnam.

In taking over his new assignment, General McChristian was briefed on Continental United States Intelligence, and

immediately asked his subordinates to find ways to cut it back. He was primarily concerned with the time it was taking away from other tasks in military intelligence.

But the general ran into resistance from the "domestic war room" and other Government agencies, particularly the Justice Department, that said they needed the information coming from the intelligence operation.

Request for Film

The Under Secretary of the Army, Mr. McGiffert, started to wonder, however, about the propriety of the operation in October, when he discovered that agents had filmed a demonstration during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. That came to his attention when the Justice Department asked him for the video tape for possible use in the Chicago Seven trial.

In a memorandum dated Feb. 5, 1969, shortly before he left the Government after the Nixon Administration took over, Mr. McGiffert said that military intelligence might be in danger of exceeding its authority and that henceforth no covert operations would be conducted.

Shortly after, the intelligence

command stopped distributing its "blacklist," but kept it up to date until the end of 1969, when it was ordered withdrawn. Because so many copies had been sent out, the Pentagon could not be sure that they were all returned for destruction.

Agreement Sought

About the same time, Mr. Jordan, the Army general counsel, began exploring with Deputy Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst the possibility of having the Justice Department take over intelligence gathering on civil disturbances. But at a meeting on April 1, he was unable to obtain an agreement. Mr. Kleindienst contended that his department lacked the manpower to do the job.

Nevertheless, General McChristian ordered some restrictions on his own authority, instructing that more time be put on security clearances and other tasks of protecting Army installations.

That is apparently where the matter stood until last January, when a former captain of military intelligence, Christopher H. Pyle, published a long article in The Washington Monthly describing some of the operations of Continental United States

Intelligence. He criticized the Army for going beyond the needs for information on civil disturbances.

In response, General McChristian instructed General Blakefield to examine all procedures in the intelligence command that might threaten political freedom and ordered the head of counterintelligence in the Pentagon, Col. John W. Downie, to do the same with policy directives.

Printout on Mrs. King

Mr. Jordan, the general counsel, then went to Fort Holabird to examine the computer data bank. He asked for a printout on several names, including that of Mrs. Coretta King, Dr. King's widow. The printout showed the possibilities for using the data bank to check on people rather than merely incidents.

Last Feb. 19 therefore, General McChristian ordered that both data banks at Fort Holabird be destroyed. The data banks at Fort Hood and Fort Monroe were destroyed later. One printout from each was kept for possible court proceedings.